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A legislative perspective

with John Arnold, Jr. / State Representative
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It is rare for a legislative session to go by without the General Assembly doing something to help the farming community, and 2008 was no exception.

While there may have been no landmark legislation, there were quite a few things that should make a positive difference in the lives of farmers in the years ahead.

One of the more prominent would have to be the \$10 million given to the proposed Kentucky Agriculture Heritage Center in Mercer County.

This center will cover 300,000 square feet and be a working farm when built. It will become a tourist draw by showcasing Kentucky's agricultural history and offering many educational activities. In addition, it will be environmentally sound, with wind turbines, solar panels and geothermal energy providing all the power it needs.

Another farm project this budget includes is \$20 million for the second phase of the University of Kentucky's Livestock Disease Diagnostic Center. This project was originally in the 2006 budget, but was unfortunately vetoed. The updated center is very much needed, however, so that it can continue playing a critical role in protecting our livestock from outbreaks of disease.

The budget includes 10 more slots at two Alabama veterinarian schools. Kentucky's partnership with Auburn University and Tuskegee School of Veterinary Medicine enables many of our young men and women to train at in-state tuition prices. With more and more veterinarians needed, this was a great measure to include even in tight budgetary times.

The same can be said for \$3 million set aside for animal shelters and \$4 million for renovating camps used by 4-H and Future Farmers of America.

Although not directly tied to farming, the Department of Agriculture will get more money to increase inspections of amusement park rides. The need for this became all too clear last summer, when a young girl was severely injured at a Louisville amusement park.

Outside of the budget, there are several new laws about to be on the books that will help the agricultural community.

House Bill 626 strengthens the "Kentucky Proud" program that you may have seen at the grocery store. This law will ensure that any product bearing this name is made entirely within Kentucky.

House Bill 484 is another measure promoting locally grown products. In this

